

Webinar - At the front line: risk management for practice managers

24 July 2014

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Tonight's panel



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Learning objectives

- > Describe some of the common risk management issues and challenges in the practice environment
- > List strategies which can be implemented by the practice manager to minimise clinical and medico-legal risk and improve patient safety in the practice
- > Identify resources and tools to assist practice managers with risk management in the practice environment



Why this topic?

Crucial role that practice managers play:

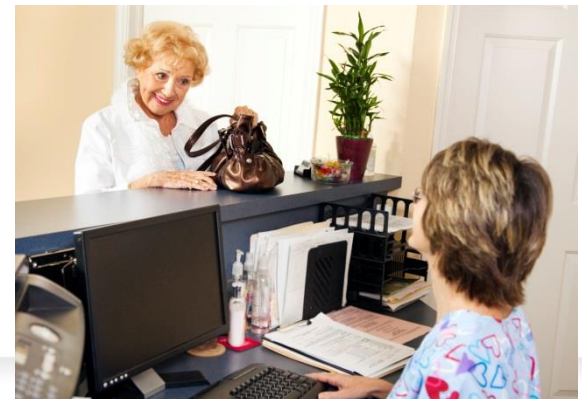
- staff management
- maintaining systems and processes
- supporting clinical contact



The case study – City Medical Practice

New receptionist

- > The City Medical Practice employs 8 doctors, a practice manager, 2 nurses and 5 part-time receptionists
- > Recently employed a new part-time receptionist (Sally Smith)
- > The practice owner offered Sally a position without speaking with the practice manager
- > Sally and her family have been patients of the practice for some time
- > Sally does not have a written contract.



Issues

- > Recruitment processes
- > Induction
- > Contract of employment
- > Blurring of boundaries: staff and patient
- > Confidentiality
- > Practice manager/practice owner relationship



Performance management/privacy breaches

- > About 6 weeks after Sally started, some issues became apparent to the practice manager:
 - Recalling patients: Sally was not calling patients but was simply preparing letters to them. Pile of unsent letters found
 - Telephone discussions: confidential information repeated back out loud
- > The practice manager spoke to Sally about the letters
- > Did not raise the issue of the telephone calls



Issues

- > Patient recall
- > Continuity of care
- > Delayed or missed diagnosis
- > Breach of patient confidentiality
- > Privacy issues
- > Practice processes

Billing

- > Part of Sally's role is to do patient billing and a daily report of Medicare item numbers billed by each doctor
- > Most doctors are slack at telling reception staff what item number to charge - Sally guesses what number should be used



Issues

- > Incorrect item numbers place the doctor at risk
- > The doctor is responsible for the item number charged
- > Doctor underpaid
- > Item numbers billed to another doctor's provider number

Parents who are separated

- > Sally receives a phone call from a child patient's father
- > He requests information about the child's most recent appointment with the doctor and what medication was prescribed



Issues

- > Practice risks and family disputes

Letter seeking release of patient information

- > The practice receives a letter from an insurance company's lawyers seeking the release of medical information about Sally
- > Sally has made an insurance claim following a recent motor vehicle accident
- > The letter asks for a complete copy of her medical record



Issues

- > What to do with these sort of requests
- > Employee's fitness for work

Dealing with difficult patients

- > The doctors at the practice see a number of “drug seeking” patients
- > Known to threaten the doctors and reception staff if they are not prescribed their requested medication
- > One day, such a patient leaves a doctor’s room “ranting and raving” and yells at Sally on the way out
- > Sally bursts into tears



Issues

- > Exit strategies
- > Patient behaviour expectations
- > Duress alarm
- > Reviewing the doctor-patient relationship
- > Practice staff safety policies

Doctor leaving

- > A patient mentions to Sally in passing that his doctor is leaving the practice
- > Practice manager knows nothing about the doctor leaving
- > Practice manager later discovers that the doctor has recently downloaded patient files and has emailed them to his home email address



Issues

- > Password protection
- > Follow up of current tests ordered
- > Continuity of care
- > Breach of privacy legislation
- > Employment contracts - clauses

Take home messages

Take home messages

- ✓ Continuous communication, monitoring of identified risks and the effectiveness of risk mitigation strategies
- ✓ Involve the whole of the team in the practice. Create the risk champions
- ✓ Have good education and auditing systems to ensure risks and compliance are managed
- ✓ Maintain central registers of quality improvement processes; complaints register; compliance register
- ✓ Maintain effective risk registers and risk treatment schedules

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